

SILVIA SCOZZI

Problems of vocal performance practice
in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* and the *Llibre Vermell*
in connection with the recordings on disc

If one tries to trace the history of vocal performance practice in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* and the *Llibre Vermell*, one realizes just how many recordings have been made. According to the research I have done so far, the first recordings date back to the late 1940s. Now the reasons for examining the problems of modern vocal practice in these two particular repertoires are various: first, the collections are both Spanish and they both transmit music sung by the faithful at two of the main centres of pilgrimage of the age; second, there are certain analogies in the notation and even in the origin of some of the melodies.¹

Musicians who perform early music today are faced with a different task from that of the recent past, when there were still no models of reference to follow and the approach to the sources was somewhat uncritical. As we well know, immense progress has been made since the days of the first recordings of early music in general. Most musicians working in recent years are well aware of the distance that stands between the music as it appears in the written text and how it should actually sound in performance. Whatever the type of notation, in all the repertoires concerned the performers must always add something in order to make the compositions come to life.

At the start of this survey of recorded interpretations, we find scant importance attributed to matters of variation and improvisation, two features that were typical of medieval performance (as is well known). In those years the main concern was posed by the study of certain musical details, particularly the question of how to perform the notes at the right pitch and with the right note values. Utter respect for the written text was therefore viewed as the highest guarantee of authenticity in performance.

Reviving the voice types and techniques used is no easy task for the modern musician. For even though the organs of voice production have certainly not changed over the centuries, the ways of using them and of exploiting the resonance chambers may instead have changed a great deal in that time. In fact, in relation to the different ways of exploiting those resonances, we use the technical terms “mask sound”, “back resonance”, “throat voice”, “chest

¹ On this second aspect, see HIGINIO ANGLÈS, “El ‘Llibre Vermell’ de Montserrat y lo cantos y la danza sacra de los peregrinos durante el siglo XIV”, in ID., *Scripta musicologica*, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e letteratura, 1975 (Storia e letteratura, Raccolta di Studi e Testi, 131), vol. I, pp. 621-661.

voice” and “head voice”. Such differences in vocal emission can become distinctive features of specific geographical areas and repertoires. And it is on such differences, in which one or another technique prevails, that the many vocal traditions of the past and present depend.

In any research on the vocal sounds of the past, the types of available documentary source are varied: theoretical treatises; literary documents and contemporary chronicles; iconographic evidence; and naturally, the music itself. However, it is essential to examine the sources as a whole, since they complement one another and should be assessed as products of the same society.

The theoretical treatises and literary works certainly offer valuable information, though one is often left in the dark about what a particular author actually means by his choice of one term rather than another. For example, verbs such as *dicere* and *cantare* can mean “speak”, “declaim”, “sing” or even “sing with otherwise unspecified instruments”.

A vocal feature we find described in Geoffrey Chaucer’s celebrated *Canterbury Tales* is the nasal sound: “Ful weel she soong the service divine, Entuned in hir nose ful semely”.² The vocal and facial postures we find in literary sources like this in turn remind one of images in the iconography, which offer wider evidence of a nasal “mask” in pre-Renaissance singers. For the 14th and 15th centuries, it is worth examining the facial postures of the singers of Simone Martini (*St Martin is Dubbed a Knight*, Assisi, Lower Church of S. Francesco, 1323-26), Luca della Robbia (Florence, Museo del Duomo, 1431-38) and Piero della Francesca (*Nativity*, London, National Gallery, 1475).

However, Philip Pickett, founder and director of the *New London Consort*, has criticized the singers of early music who follow this approach and claims that Chaucer’s description has been misinterpreted.³ He argues that the poet was here engaging in biting satire and that this vocal typology was a popular style, to be avoided by the cultivated. This may well be true, but the fact still remains that a nasal voice was one of the various possible voice types. The nasal voice might well have been widespread in the pre-Renaissance period, and one can hypothesize a gradual passage from a *nasal* voice to a more distinctly *guttural* voice. At the beginning of the 17th century, it is by now acknowledged that both the nasal and guttural voices were considered defective.⁴ Already Conrad von Zabern (*De modo bene cantandi*, 1474)

² GEOFFREY CHAUCER, *The Canterbury Tales*, General Prologue, lines 122-123.

³ Pickett’s criticism appears in: *Carmina Burana*, New London Consort, 4 CDs, Editions de L’Oiseau-Lyre 417 373-2, 421 062-2, 425 118-2, 425 119-2, P © 1989, The Decca Record Company Limited, London, Introductory notes, pp. 24-27.

⁴ LUIGI ROVIGHI and ADRIANO CAVICCHI, “Prassi esecutiva”, in *Dizionario Enciclopedico Universale della Musica e dei Musicisti*, ed. by Alberto Basso, Torino, UTET, 1983, reprint 1998, III, p. 714.

criticizes with particular severity the bad habits of singers who “nasalize” in choral performance, vocalize excessively (thereby creating confusion in the pronunciation) or are negligent in their behaviour while singing.⁵

We can assume that in the past centuries there was a great variety of styles, just as there is today. However, we shall probably never discover what the ideal vocal sound was; and besides, what was judged to be a “fine voice” in one period was by no means necessarily such in the following one.

One characteristic of the earlier recordings on disc (though at times we also find it more recently) is the performance of just a few strophes (sometimes only one) for each melody. This may well be for “reasons of space”, as we are sometimes told in the introductory notes, but equally one could interpret it as a sign of the importance attributed to the individual melody, which the performers see as the only element constituting the “music”.

But to go back to the repertoires examined here, the *Llibre Vermell* is one of the few manuscripts from the copious musical archive of the monastery of Montserrat to have survived the fire caused by Napoleon’s French troops in October 1811. Completed in 1399, it originally contained about 172 folio pages, of which 35 are lost. It also contained ten musical works (originally perhaps more) written by unknown hands. Its content is particularly valuable because it presents a wide variety of musical and literary styles, as well as a rare prefatory note to the first song.⁶

To grasp the importance of this source, it is sufficient to consider that among the surviving collections of sacred music it is unique of its kind. For though much sacred and secular polyphonic music of the 14th-century has survived (principally in France, Italy and Germany), to our knowledge there in no country in which songs or sacred dances of the second half of the 14th century has been preserved, let alone songs of such a markedly popular character as those in the *Llibre Vermell*. Guillaume de Machaut, for example, wrote French *lais* and *ballades*, for which the music has also survived, but these are secular works composed in a typically courtly style and certainly not written to entertain pilgrims.⁷

From the Europe of those centuries, as well as the Monserrat songs, another manuscript has survived, again Spanish. This is the 12th-century collection contained in the Codex pseudo-Calixtinus, preserved in the cathedral

⁵ JOSEPH DYER, “Singing with proper refinement”, *Early Music*, VI, 1978, pp. 207-227: 215.

⁶ “Since the pilgrims of Monserrat sometimes like to sing and dance, both during the night vigils in the church of the Blessed Virgin and by day in the church square, places where it is permitted only to sing decorous and devout songs, a few songs of a nature suited to satisfy their need have been written. One must make use of them with respect and moderation, without causing any disturbance to those who desire to continue in prayers and religious meditations.”

⁷ ANGLÈS, “El ‘Llibre Vermell’”, pp. 625-626.

of Santiago de Compostela. It is known that the polyphony of Compostela, at least that of certain pieces, was not the work of Spanish composers, and the fact that this music was performed in the cathedral also implies the presence of singers specialized in this art. In this respect the *Llibre Vermell* is partly different, since it is more popular in spirit. At Montserrat it was generally the faithful themselves who sang and danced, as a means of alleviating their spiritual commitment; while at other times they chanted songs of pardon and penitence, according to the true spirit and idea of pilgrimage. But the diversity of the *Llibre Vermell* is only partial, since alongside the monophonic pieces of evidently popular origin, which could have been sung by the faithful with ease, there are also polyphonic pieces of a certain complexity and interest. Indeed the very diversity within this codex is an aspect not always grasped and suitably brought out by modern performers, as is clearly attested by the recordings on disc.

One aspect of the history of music at Montserrat that should be remembered is the great influence exerted by the celebrated Escolanía, or boys' choir. The choir originated in the 13th century at the latest, though we have no definite news of it before the 15th century. Then it amounted to some twenty boy singers, whereas in the 15th century the number rose to about thirty, a figure that remained practically unvaried until modern times. The main duty of these boys was to sing the high voice parts of polyphony. According to H. Anglès,⁸ the antiphon "dulcis armonia" (thus is defined *O virgo splendens*, a piece in the form of a three-voice canon) is perhaps an example of the work of these *niños cantores*. It was probably one of the pieces they sang during pilgrimages and at royal visits. It is interesting to observe that some artists painted the *Moreneta* (Black Virgin) surrounded by *escolans*, some in the act of singing and others while playing instruments. This confirms not only the presence of the boy singers, but also suggests that stringed and wind instruments were customarily used for accompaniment and perhaps also for solo performances at the shrine of Montserrat in the late 14th/early 15th centuries.

Few are the modern performances that make use of a boys choir in their recordings. Among them, however, is an ensemble that, though working in the 1960s, was already very responsive to matters of authentic performance practice, in both the choice of instruments and voices and the preparatory research. I refer to the Studio der Frühen Musik founded by Thomas Binkley and Andrea von Ramm, and the recording itself dates to 1966.⁹ In fact Binkley can be seen as the real pioneer of medieval music, a man to whom the subsequent interpreters of this repertoire, including David Munrow, Philip Pick-

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 632.

⁹ *Llibre Vermell - Robin et Marion, Secular music c. 1300*, Studio der Frühen Musik, Munich. Recording: April 1966, P 1966, Teldec classics international, Hamburg.

ett and others, owe a great deal. Now, in its 1966 recording the Studio der Frühen Musik uses a boys choir to sing the circular canon *Laudemus Virginem, mater est*, the third piece in the codex.

Another piece worth noting is the ninth piece in the manuscript, the two-voice *Inperayritz de la ciutat iojosa*. Analysis of its musical form and literary text shows that it is neither a ballata, nor a virelai, nor even a motet, since it has no vocal or vocal-instrumental tenor differently texted from that of the upper voices. Instead it is a “canción a dos voces vocales”. In the *Llibre Vermell* there is indeed a different text for each voice of this piece, but Anglès doubts that performance at Montserrat followed the manner used in the 13th-century motets, i.e. that of singing different texts simultaneously in the two upper voices. The text consists of seven *coplas*, each commemorating one Mary’s attributes, which strongly suggests that the two different texts were not sung simultaneously, otherwise the meaning of the poetry would have been compromised. Now, a fragment preserved in the Diocesan Archive of Tarragona could have helped us to clarify the case of *Inperayritz*, if the music of both voices had been preserved. But unfortunately the lower voice is missing, so we have no way of knowing whether it carried the text of the first *copla* or that of the second. Many performers tackling this piece have based their decisions on Anglès’s insights and have thus guaranteed textual clarity by having just one strophe sung in the upper voice and using an instrument to play the second voice.

One such case is the 1990 recording by the *New London Consort* directed by Philip Pickett,¹⁰ an interesting version also because of the type of voice used in the piece. The solo singer is Andrew King and even on first hearing one detects a classically trained tenor voice featuring almost constant vibrato. Here the soloist alternates the strophes with a female choir that sings the tune an octave higher. The performance, however, is somewhat weighed down not only by the voice type but also by an excessively slow speed.

Others, however, have opted for the alternative of singing different texts simultaneously, an example being the ensemble *Micrologus* in its recording of the *Llibre Vermell* of 1994.¹¹ In this case the upper part is given to the female voice, while a male voice sings the other text in the lower part. Though this is clearly also a possible solution, the practical consequences of this approach certainly diminish the intelligibility of the text.

From a preliminary examination and hearing of a part of this audio mate-

¹⁰ *Llibre Vermell of Montserrat*, Ensemble *New London Consort*. Recording: Novembre 1990, L’oiseau-Lyre 433 186-2.

¹¹ *Llibre Vermell, Canti di pellegrinaggio al Monte Serrato - Spagna XIV secolo*, ensemble *Micrologus*, CD *Micrologus* 0002.0. Recording: December 1994, P 1996 *Micrologus* Ed. Disc., © 1998 *Micrologus* Ed. Disc.

rial, we therefore notice the presence of a variety of vocal approaches. What most distinguishes the early recordings, but in some cases even the more recent ones, is a style noticeably influenced by Western classical training. And the results show that adherence to classical technique leads to anachronistic performance: the phrasing is plain and monotonous; the vocal colouring is practically uniform; dynamic variability is limited and introduced only very gradually; only diatonic steps are sung; and nothing is added to the written edition.

Among the oldest recordings of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* here examined, there is one that is now almost thirty years old: an LP of 1974 with Theresa Berganza singing to the guitar accompaniment of Narciso Yepes.¹² This record offers performances of three *Cantigas* (CSM 10, CSM 100, CSM 340) together with other Spanish Renaissance pieces. Though listening to this interpretation is surely a pleasant enough experience for modern audiences, it is utterly insignificant in terms of authenticity, owing to both the type of voice used and the choice of instrument, with the guitar also being adopted in the remaining pieces. Nor are the melodic structures always respected. For example, in CSM 100, *Santa Maria Strela do dia*, the refrain is repeated at the start, though to a different text the second time; after this a single strophe is sung, at the end of which the volta, which has the function of preparing for the return of the refrain, is omitted and the refrain is instead performed immediately. The vocal performance features not only constant vibrato, but also very extensive breaths after each phrase that are more typical of operatic phrasing and hence somewhat impair the result of the performance.

That recording dates back to 1974, but the surprising thing is that when we listen to a much more recent performance, by Brigitte Lesne of the ensemble *Alla Francesca* in 1999,¹³ we still find the same problems in certain cases. Take, for example, the performance of CSM 353, *Quen a omagen da Virgen*. Here again one notes the emission of a prevalently dark sound and heavy vowels: this is because the larynx is too low and the vowels are placed at the back of the mouth. The result is therefore an excessive vibrato that inhibits agility, flexibility and every type of vocal shading.

Another problem neglected in the recordings of the past (and some more recent ones as well) is that of ornamentation. Many scholars and performers of medieval music agree that ornamentation was applied to the melodic line, but neither the details of this practice nor extent of its use have been fully grasped. The idea that the medieval vocal style was radically different from

¹² *Spanish songs from Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Theresa Berganza and Narciso Yepes, LP Deutsche Grammophon 2530 504, Estudio fonogram, Madrid. Recording: June 1974.

¹³ *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, Alla Francesca, Recording: October 1999 Paris, OPUS 111, OPS 30-308, PC 2000.

modern Western practices has evidently been a matter of speculation for just a minority, since most performances offer one just what is given in the written sources and nothing more. And yet it is known that in such repertoires one cannot separate vocal style and ornamentation. What is today meant by the term “ornamentation” was in fact an integral part of the medieval concept of musical line.

The treatment of vocal style and ornamentation in the contemporary treatises is a subject discussed in a recent study by Timothy J. McGee.¹⁴ As the author himself asserts, there are great limits in such research, given the scarcity of secondary sources or studies on the traditions of ornamentation associated with the different geographical areas. Nonetheless, the embellishments described by the theorists are both numerous and somewhat complex: different types of vibrato and tremolo, trills of various widths and speeds, *appoggiaturas*, different types of vocal inflection, and various combinations of all these elements. The many substantial differences between the vocal styles of the past centuries and the Western classical style lie precisely in the type of technique required to perform those very ornaments. The sliding sound of the *liquescents*; the abandonment of the final degree of a *pes*; the pulsing sounds of the *quilisma* and *oriscus*; the use of quarter-tones in trills and vibrato: these are all fundamental elements of the medieval vocal sound, but instead utterly alien to Western modern vocal practices.

The inadequacy of Western vocal technique has therefore prompted some musicians to base their performances on other vocal models. And one such model is folk song, since one of its features is the very fact that the repertoire is preserved and transmitted orally. Such a direct method of learning, based as it is on memory instead of writing, allows the performer great freedom to improvise. Giovanna Marini, an Italian singer who has always devoted her work to folk music and song, describes the classical vocal tradition as a type of singing in continuous evolution, whereas folk singing, which has no artistic pretensions but is rich in ritualistic aspirations, displays vocal features that have greater stability over the course of time.

The distinguishing features of the folk singing voice are very remote from those of operatic singing and in many cases closer to the spontaneity of the untrained voice. In an interview with Patrizia Bovi, who like Giovanna Marini upholds the importance of “contextualizing” the repertoire, the conversation turned to how one should reconsider the devotional repertoire of the *Cantigas*, in view of the fact that as a corpus it is only apparently unified. For within the collection we find a certain diversity, attributable to various fac-

¹⁴ TIMOTHY J. MCGEE, *The Sound of Medieval Song, Ornamentation and Vocal Style according to the Treatises*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998 and the respective review by Silvia Scozzi in *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia*, XXXIV, 1999, pp. 405-408.

tors, amongst which the notation and the origin of the melodies, which often display very pronounced differences. Although the pieces can be considered as a single corpus for the way in which they were collected, in other respects they can be divided into different groups, with each group calling for a different voice type. In certain melodies we trace the influence of Eastern music; in others we find a strongly Western element. Even the different modes require a different vocal colour; as do the ornaments and the ways of lingering on a particular note: all features that require suitable nuances. In collections such as this it is always sensible to avoid generalizations. Even as regards the pitch intervals used in the *Cantigas*, there are some songs that are more demanding in their requirements, implying that they could be managed only by expert singers, just as there are simpler melodies that are more easily sung and do not require much skill. Moreover, one can distinguish the *Cantigas* dedicated to songs of praise (*Cantigas de loor*) from those instead associated with the description of miracles (*Cantigas de mirages*), which present specific modal formulas.

Nor, for that matter, must we generalize when referring to “folk singing”. If on first hearing we find a certain type of singing “folkish”, this is purely because we detect the distance from the models we are more familiar with, such as those of Classical or Baroque music: whatever fails to resemble the distinctive “sound” of these repertoires is labelled “folk”.

Among the interpretations displaying a vocal technique that tends towards a “folk” voice, an interesting case is that of *Cantigas* 403 (*Aver non poderia*) sung by Patrizia Bovi with the Italian *Micrologus* ensemble.¹⁵ Here, above all, we note not only a complete absence of vibrato, but also clearer and lighter vowels: a sign that the larynx is in a medium-high position (i.e. the opposite to what we find in classical training), which allows for greater flexibility in vocal emission. We perceive vowel nuances that were instead unavailable in the previous interpretations.

Another model, which has been consulted above all for its bearing on the early instrumental practice of stringed and percussion instruments, but which could just as usefully be extended to vocal practice, is that of the Middle-Eastern tradition. This vocal style, which is still current in the countries of the eastern Mediterranean, features extremely agile voices, the recourse to a light, forward tone with rapid throat articulations, and the presence of variations and shadings of the voice similar to those described by the theorists of the past. It is also worth remembering that in both Middle-Eastern music and Western medieval music the melodic material is essentially monophonic, and

¹⁵ *Madre de Deus, Cantigas de Santa Maria*, Micrologus. Recording: December 1997, CD Opus 111 OPS 30-225, PC 1998 Opus 111, Paris.

that the type of ornamentation described in the various medieval treatises is that most suited to a monophonic tradition.

The Islamic influence exerted on the instrumental techniques and on European musicianship in general would therefore seem to support the policy of certain modern musicians to draw on performance practices from the Near- and Middle-East. For in all likelihood such practices still preserve traces of a very old tradition. Nor can one lightly underestimate those eight centuries during which the Islamic and Christian cultures lived side by side in medieval Spain. Moreover, the fact that certain elements of Eastern art filtered northwards at a very early stage is also evident from the iconographic sources.

As the miniatures in the *Cantigas* manuscripts themselves show, for the performance of these pieces Alfonso X hosted at his court not only *trovadores*, but also Christian, Arab and Jewish *juglares* and musicians.¹⁶ On the strength of the miniatures and of the known documentation, it transpires that the Arab musicians were more numerous than even the Christians and Jews. And though many scholars claim that these musicians were not the actual composers of the melodies, there is no doubt that they were its performers. It appears that Alfonso followed the fashion of the Muslim courts of Andalusia, where the caliphs imported slave-singers from the East to give added lustre to the music-making at the palace. It is very likely, therefore, that the vocal executions of these melodies (as well as the instrumental contribution, for that matter) were strongly influenced by Eastern techniques and style.

This explains why some modern musicians have also turned to the Arab theorists of the past, who have fortunately left us important evidence of their work. All the main Arab theorists show that they clearly knew not only how the human organs of vocal production worked, but also commanded a very detailed terminology, from which we also infer the importance of the many nuances of vocal timbre and voice production used in the cultivated forms of singing in that region. As Al-Farabi writes in his *Great Book on Music* (*Kitab al-musiqi al-Kabir*), at the start of his chapter on the singing voice:¹⁷ “The sounds of the sung voice differ from one another not only in height and depth but also for other qualities.” He also devotes extended passages of his text to illustrating the emission and use of a wide variety of sounds: the head sounds and chest sounds, the nasalized sounds (especially prized at the start of a melody), the long sounds broken up into in an intense wavering, the staccato sounds (*shadharat*), and the hiatus (*nabara*). He also discusses how to fit the

¹⁶ HIGINIO ANGLÈS, *La Música de las Cantigas de Santa Maria del Rey Alfonso el Sabio*, III, Barcelona, Disputación Provincial de Barcelona. Biblioteca Central, 1943-1964, pp. 456-457.

¹⁷ BARON RODOLPHE D'ERLANGER, *La Musique Arabe*, II, Paris, Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1935, p. 79ff.

words to the singing, how to fill the wider intervals with quick scales, and how to decorate a single syllable with endless vocalization.

One of the fundamental characteristics of Arab singing was, and still is, the passion for embellishments (*zawa*, *tahasin*, *zuwaq*): trills, embellishments, appoggiaturas and sliding scales, as well as the *tarkib*, a possible ornament achieved by associating a fourth, a fifth and an octave with the sounds of the melody. All of the above implied agile voices that could alternate falsetto with a full voice, thereby also ensuring an extremely wide range (three octaves in exceptional cases).

Some of the musicians who have turned to this vocal, as well as instrumental, model have also collaborated with artists from a musical culture that is only apparently distant from our own. A case in point is that of Joel Cohen. In making his CD dedicated to Alfonso's collection,¹⁸ Cohen collaborated with Mohammed Briouel of the *Abdelkrim Rais Andalusian Orchestra* of Fès. He above all underlines the possible connection between Arab music and the music of medieval Spain, which he claims went well beyond matters of organology. The classical music of North Africa is known as "Andalusian Music" and its present-day performers are very conscious that they are perpetuating a system of musical thought that essentially follows the example of the Muslim courts of medieval Spain. Taking as their cue the idea of "cultural heterogeneity", which we have already seen to be a feature of Alfonso's court, they have also opted for heterogeneity in singing styles by engaging vocal soloists from different musical cultures. Among other things, this has meant performing some of the *Cantigas* purely vocally, without accompaniment, and, by so doing, echoing certain traditions of sacred song that were deeply rooted in both the Islamic and Christian traditions.

If, for example, we listen to *Cantigas* 230, *Tod'ome deve dar loor*, one of the first characteristics of the voice type to attract our attention is the emission of a nasal sound. Such "nasality", a typical feature of Eastern singing still today, raises the question of the two distinct qualities described by the theorist Al-Farabi: "nasality" itself and the "retention" of the voice.¹⁹ While "retention" occurs when all the air passes through the nose and the lips stay closed, "nasality" occurs when a part of the air passes through the nose, the rest through the lips. In the same rendering we also note the execution of various embellishments, pulsing sounds, sliding sounds, quarter-tones and a general recourse to an ornamentation so dense as to seem inseparable from the melody.

¹⁸ *Cantigas de Santa Maria, Alfonso X el Sabio*, Camerata Mediterranea and Abdelkrim Rais Andalusian Orchestra of Fès, CD Erato 3984-254982, PC Erato Disques, Paris, 1999.

¹⁹ D'ERLANGER, *La Musique Arabe*, p. 57.

Of great interest is the opinion of the scholar Karl-Werner Gumpel,²⁰ who has studied the description of ornamentation in certain Spanish treatises of a later period, the *Arte de melodia sobre canto llano y canto d'organo* of the 16th century and the anonymous 14th-century treatise *Quatuor principalia*. Though drawn up in a period later than that concerned in our study, the *Arte de melodia* contains detailed instructions on the vocal ornamentation practised in Toledo and describes the tremolo, trills, repercussions, diminutions, mordents, appoggiaturas and the examples of how to fill intervals. And he does so in a way that closely resembles Jerome of Moravia. In his discussion of this work Gumpel compares the Spanish practices with those described in the *Quatuor principalia* and in the 10th-century writings of Al-Farabi, thereby showing the existence of a continuous tradition that we also find described in other Spanish treatises of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

In conclusion, one could conjecture that the vocal practices of these repertoires remained fairly intact over a long period. Also very likely is a certain continuity in the tradition, as in the case of the Eastern singing style, which still today retains features similar to those described in certain very early treatises. In Spain one can still come across traditions presenting vocal sonorities that can presumably be traced back to those of the *Cantigas* and hence deserve further study. From the ethnomusicological point of view there is still a lot of work that needs doing.

In early music the voice becomes an instrument that offers scope for a complete range of nuances and a very broad palette of expressive colouring. As Andrea von Ramm has claimed, in this respect medieval music expands rather than restricts the possibilities of the vocal organ.

²⁰ KARL-WERNER GÜMPEL, "El canto melódico de Toledo: algunas reflexiones sobre su origen y estilo", *Recerca Musicologica*, VIII, 1988, pp. 25-45.